Brunekreef, B., Dockery, D.W., Speizer, F.E., Ware, J.H., Spengler, J.D., Ferris, B.G. "Home Dampness and Respiratory Morbidity in Children" American Review of Respiratory Disease 140: 1363-1367, 1989.

SUMMARY: This study examined the relationship between measures of home dampness and respiratory illness and symptoms in a cohort of 4,625 eight-to 12-yr-old children living in six U.S. cities. Home dampness was characterized from questionnaire reports of mold or mildew inside the home, water damage to the home, and the occurrence of water on the basement floor. Symptoms of respiratory and other illness were collected by questionnaire. Pulmonary function was measured by spirometry. Signs of home dampness were reported in a large proportion of the homes. In five of the six cities, one or more of the dampness indicators were reported in more than 50% of the homes. The association between measures of home dampness and both respiratory symptoms and other non-chest illness was both strong and consistent. Odds ratios for molds varied from 1.27 to 2.12, and for dampness from 1.23 to 2.16 after adjustment for maternal smoking, age, gender, city of residence, and parental education. The relationship between home dampness and pulmonary function was weak, with an estimated mean reduction of 1.0% in FEF25-75 associated with dampness and 1.6% with molds. We conclude that dampness in the home is common in many areas of the United States and that home dampness is a strong predictor of symptoms of respiratory and other illness symptoms among 8- to 12-yr-old children.

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